United Nations A/AC.198/2003/5

General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 March 2003

Original: English

Committee on Information
Twenty-fifth session
28 April-9 May 2003
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*
Consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General

Modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries was established in January 2003 as a measure to improve the provision of library services, as called for in the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations reform (A/57/387 and Corr.1). Chaired by the Department of Public Information, and working through coordinated management and collaborative policy-making, the Committee will aim to facilitate interdependency and foster initiatives to create a dynamic, synergistic and fully functional network of library services throughout the Organization.

* A/AC.198/2003/1.

03-27311 (E) 120303

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, requested the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth review of library activities at Headquarters and United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, as well as at the regional commissions. The review, which was subsequently conducted in 2002, identified two major areas requiring special attention, namely, the lack of integrated management and the need for modernization.

2. In response to those findings, the Secretary-General, in action 9 of his report on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387 and Corr.1), proposed measures for improving the management of United Nations libraries. The Department of Public Information, which administers the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, was given a coordinating role for that purpose. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002, took note of those proposals and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report for further consideration by the relevant United Nations bodies, including the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session. The present report has been prepared in compliance with that request.

II. Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries

3. The Deputy Secretary-General convened a meeting by videoconference in January 2003 to discuss how to implement the proposals of the Secretary-General. Participants included the Under-Secretaries-General of the Department of Public Information and the Department of Management, and senior officials from their departments, as well as the heads or representatives of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, the Executive Secretaries, or their representatives, of the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and a representative of the Rector of the United Nations University in Tokyo.

4. As a first step, the Deputy Secretary-General proposed the establishment of a steering committee to develop and implement strategies to achieve a more modern, efficient and accessible system of library services within the United Nations. Support was unanimous and she therefore officially established the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, to be chaired by the Department of Public Information.

A. Mandate

5. While respecting fully the immediate priorities and individual capacities of the member libraries, the Steering Committee is mandated to discuss and agree upon policies to facilitate the complex transition from self-sufficiency to interdependency and foster initiatives to create a dynamic, synergistic and fully functional library network. Furthermore, in order to expand existing cooperative strategies for collection development and resource sharing, and to develop new strategies, the Committee will encourage a shift from a culture of "ownership" to one of access.

6. It is envisaged that the work of the Committee will concentrate on the following areas: inter-library management initiatives promoting collaborative and coordinated activities, products and services; optimization of financial resources; sharing best practices and lessons learned; expanded technical assistance programmes for the small, field and depository libraries; archival storage; digitization; bibliographic control of United Nations documentation; production of multilingual web pages and portals; collaborative reference services; database management and maintenance; strategies for marketing library outputs and services; staff training and development; and staff mobility.

7. The Steering Committee will also play a leading role in ensuring that all libraries of the Organization bring their specialized expertise in information management to bear in the development of all knowledge-sharing initiatives of the Organization.

B. Operating model

8. The Steering Committee, under the chairmanship of the Director, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information, will meet regularly to set priorities and policies. The head of each United Nations Office will appoint a permanent representative to the Committee, which will report to the Deputy Secretary-General, through the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. The first meeting of the Committee will be held by videoconference in March 2003.

III. Conclusions

9. **The Steering Committee will work to leverage existing investments in human, financial, technological and information resources in the system of library services in the United Nations and to blend traditional library functions with advanced technologies. Through coordinated management, it is expected that economies and efficiencies will be achieved and services optimized to strengthen the outreach of the Organization.**

10. **A primary aim of the Committee will be to promote and expedite projects that will provide instantaneous, electronic access to a seamlessly integrated, coordinated and interdependent global repository of intellectual resources for users, widely distributed around the world.**